

## Cruise by LPLTVH

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**Summary:**

On a moment of break, the party went on trip on a boat with their school.

Elmax on a boat. Short story but long chapters. Don't hesitate to leave comments :)

# 1. First time on a boat

## Author's Note:

Elmax on a boat. Short story but long chapters. Don't hesitate to leave comments :)

The school organized a trip for the teens at the end of the year. Even if El wasn't at school yet, she was allowed to go with her friends, especially because Hopper insisted, and nobody could say no to the chief of the police. The young girl was excited and scared at the same time, she had never been on a boat before, she didn't even know how it looked like. Hopper drove her at the port, where all her friends were waiting for her. She kissed her father's cheek and got out of the car with her luggage, going to her friends. She took all of them in her arms and kissed her boyfriend, Mike.

- "I don't know what I'm supposed to do," said El.

- "Nothing special, just enjoying," smiled Dustin.

El nodded.

- "We'll sleep on the boat?"

- "Yep, and you'll sleep with me," answered Max. "We're in the same cabin."

- "Cabin?"

- "Yeah, it's rooms on a boat. It's gonna be fun!"

- "Yes, it's gonna be fun," repeated El with a smile.

Mike wrapped his arm around her and kissed her temple, seeing she was stressing. The two lovebirds joined the rest of the class, while the three other boys and the redhead stayed behind. Max was burning inside, feeling sick. Every time she was seeing them together it was like if someone was punching her again and again in her stomach. The three boys knew she had a crush on El, but Max didn't know they knew.

They joined the teacher who explained them how the trip would happen. Two days on the boat, a day visiting an island, and two more days on the boat. It was quite clear, and easy to remember. Mr. Clarke called them one by one and let them go on the ship, to be sure they were all here. El began to stress because all her friends were called before her, and she wondered if she was really allowed to come. All the teens were disappearing on the boat, leaving only her with the teacher.

- "So, it's you Jane Hopper?" smiled Mr. Clarke.

El looked around and shyly nodded.

- "Welcome then, you can join your friends."

- "Thank you."

El felt better. She followed the same path as the others and saw her friends waiting for her. When she approached, Mike instantly grabbed her hand to keep her close to him. Max lightly rolled her eyes, not believing him. El wasn't even allowed to stand where she wanted! Disgusting.

- "You think there is an arcade!?" asked excitedly Lucas.

- "It would be so cool!" answered Will.

- "Let's see!" told Dustin. "Max, you come with us?"

- "Sure, and you?"

- "No, we're going to hang around," replied Mike.

El had a disappointed face that Max noticed.

- "But maybe El wanna come with us?" said Max.

- "We're good Max, go with the others!" told Mike.

- "I'm not talking to you!"

- "I wanna spend time with my girlfriend! Go away now!"

- "Maybe she doesn't want to spend time with you! You didn't even ask her!"

- "It's fine!" cut El. "We'll catch you later, okay?"

- "Fine!" grumbled the redhead.

Max walked angrily away, joining the three boys.

- "What's her fucking problem!?" told Mike with an upset tone.

- "She wanted to spend time with me, that's all," answered El.

- "She needs to understand that it's me first!"

- "Yes..."

Mike wrapped his arm around her shoulder and leaned for a kiss. El was a bit mad at him, but she still accepted the kiss. She didn't like how he was acting with Max, he was always mean, but just with her, when he was with El, he was all fluffy and cute, which always surprised her.

Max followed her friends through the boat. They all went to their rooms to let their bags before visiting the place. It was so huge, and there were so many things! There was even a pool! On a boat! A pool on a boat! It was amazing! The four friends kept running everywhere like young children at Disneyland, following the signs through the different decks.

- "Arcade!" read triumphantly Dustin.

They followed the arrow and finally arrived. It was like a dream, like if they were at the paradise of gamers. The three boys split, trying to see all the games they could play, while Max just wandered between the machines, not knowing if she cared or not.

- "Look, Max!" called Will. "There is Dig Dug!"

The redhead had an amused sigh with her nose and playfully shook her head before joining her friend.

- "You know there is already one in Hawkins?" asked rhetorically Max.

- "I know, but this one doesn't have MadMax as the best score!"

- "You know how to talk to me."

The young boy moved aside to let his friend play. He saw how hurt she was when she saw Mike and El walk away together, and he didn't want her to keep thinking of that, not able to change anything for now. But he could clear her head, which was still something. He watched her enjoy her game, give quick looks to her score crazily increasing, and press the buttons faster and faster.

- "Yeah, I killed it!" stated happily Max, her face red because of all the energy she used.

- "Not surprising! Now your name is gonna go around the world!"

- "Yeah! It's gonna travel more than me!"

- "That's so sad," chuckled Will.

Max giggled, feeling a bit better. The two friends joined Lucas and Dustin who were playing at Super Mario Bros. The two boys were excited on their buttons, trying to reach the next level.

- "Damn it!" grumbled Dustin, hitting the machine with the palm of his hand.

- "I told you to jump!" replied Lucas.

- "No! You told me to slide and THEN jump!"

- "You did any of it anyway!"

- "Relax guys, you're bad, we already know that!" joked Max.

- "Shut up Max! We were going to win!"

- "But you didn't! Like always!"

- "You are a mean person," stated Dustin.

- "Just realistic."

Lucas winced, making laugh Max and Will, while Dustin pinched his lips together and playfully shook his head. The four friends left the arcade and kept visiting. They arrived in a big salon with beige sofas, with a view on the ocean. They sat and began to talk when Mike and El were walking in their direction, Mike talking while El was still with her bags and looking at them with a smile.

- "You didn't put your bags in our room?" frowned Max.

- "We didn't find it," answered Mike.

- "You make any effort!"

- "We had other things to do!"

- "Like eating each other's faces?"

Lucas made weird movement with his tongue to mock them, making laugh the three others and wince Mike, but it embarrassed El who was blushing and looking at her feet.

- "(stands) Come on, I'll show you our room," smiled the redhead, taking her bags and her hand.

Max felt her heart racing. She was finally having her moment with El without Mike forcing her to follow him. She wasn't objective, Mike was certainly a good boyfriend, she just thought she would be a better girlfriend. The redhead opened the door, letting her friend discover their room. On the right was a door for the bathroom, on the left a cupboard, then two beds on each side with a table between, against the front side, with a window above it. El stepped inside with wide opened eyes.

- "It's bigger than my room!" stated El.

- "Amazing, right?" smiled proudly Max.

- "Right."

- "So, which bed?"

- "Um...I don't know. The one you don't want."

- "I don't care either so...you can try them."

- "Try them?" frowned El.

- "Yeah, you lay down on one, and then on the other one, and you see on which one you feel better."

El nodded. She took a serious face, like if she was playing with her life, and went to the first bed. She lied down, looked at the ceiling, changed her position many times, before standing and doing the same on the other one.

- "Verdict?"

- "I think...I think I preferred the first one."

- "Then, get out of my bed," joked the redhead.

El raised her arms, asking for her help. Max playfully shook her head but grabbed the two hands with pleasure. Once on her feet, El had a small smile and a light blush on her cheeks. Max didn't know where to look, she didn't want to stare at her, she would certainly become all red and look stupid. To avoid this embarrassment, she gently pushed her on the bed, which made laugh her friend.

- "Why did you do that?" chuckled El.

- "Like that," shrugged Max with a pout.

El laughed more and grabbed Max's hands to make her fall too on the bed. The redhead rolled on her side and began to laugh with her friend.

- "You wanna go back with the others?" asked Max.

- "Not now, we're good here, no?"

- "Yeah, totally."

The two girls installed the bed to sit correctly, both taking a

magazine to read. But the redhead couldn't stop giving side looks to El, she liked her serious face she had when she was reading or concentrating, she thought it was cute.

It was almost time for lunch, so the girls decided to join the others. They found them in front of the cafeteria, waiting for them.

- "Finally!" told Lucas.

- "We can eat now!" said Dustin.

Mike instantly put his arm around El's shoulders and kissed her temple, taking her away from the redhead. But it was fine, she was the one who would sleep with her, it was still better. She couldn't force them to stop dating, she had no rights to do that. The friends stood in line and took everything they could to eat. They found a table near a window and sat there.

- "You know, you didn't have to take EVERYTHING!" told Lucas.

- "It's free! If it's free, I take it!" answered Dustin.

- "You'll be sick," stated Max.

- "Wanna bet? Who think I'll be sick?"

Max, Lucas, and Mike raised their hands.

- "That's why Will and El are my favorites!"

- "You really think he won't be sick!?" frowned Max.

- "Um, yeah, I mean, he ate worse," said Will.

- "Yeah...That's, that's true. Go on, I wanna see that!"

The teens began to eat their meal, Max watching with insistence the boy in front of her, wanting to know how many time it would last before he threw up. They were all at the dessert, and Dustin was still eating his appetizers.

- "It's gonna be cold, and your ice creams are melting, it was a stupid



idea!" stated Max with an upset tone.

- "Yeah, we're here for one week, you could have try the other things the next days!" added Lucas.

- "Let the professional working," told Dustin with difficulties, feeling his stomach about to explode.

- "Professional my ass! You're dying, and you don't wanna admit it!" said the redhead.

- "I'm fine! I just need...more time!"

- "And another stomach!" mocked the black boy.

- "I'm a bit disappointed, I was expecting more from you," sighed Will.

- "Lunch is not over!" replied the curly-haired boy.

- "We won't spend the rest of the day here! We've better things to do!" told Max.

- "Yeah! I wanna try the pool!" said Lucas.

- "Fine! I'll go faster, like that I'll be sick, and you'll be happy!"

- "Good!" answered the redhead with a provoking smile.

Dustin cracked his fingers and attacked again his meal. This time, he ate faster, with bigger mouthfuls, disgusting all his friends around. In two minutes, he finished everything, under the uncertain frown of the others not knowing if they should be proud or ashamed.

- "He did it!" stated Will with a surprised tone.

- "For how long!" replied Max.

The curly-haired boy's face began to pale, accompanied with big cold sweat on his forehead and temples. The others all stood, before going away, not wanting to see him explode.

- "Assholes!" screamed Dustin.

Once outside the cafeteria, the teens giggled.

- "Someone should stay with him," told Will.

They looked at each other before agreeing and looking at him.

- "Fine, I go!"

Will went back in the cafeteria to help his friend, while the others kept walking in the corridor.

- "So? The pool?" asked Lucas.

- "Hell yes!" answered Max with enthusiasm.

- "You come?"

- "Uh-"

- "She doesn't really like water," cut Mike.

- "Yeah...I'm sure she could have told me that by herself!"

- "I didn't want her to feel uncomfortable with your question!"

- "She didn't have the time! She didn't even have the time to think of it! Maybe she wants to swim with us!"

- "Oh, come on! Everyone will be in the pool, it's gonna be Hell! You really think she wants that!?"

- "Why not asking her!?"

The two boys turned but noticed the two girls were not here anymore. Max and El were running in the corridor, holding hands, and laughing, before stopping in front of their door.

- "God, they were so annoying!" chuckled the redhead.

- "We should be used to it!" added El.

- "I don't think it's possible."

Max opened the door and let El go inside first before following her and closing the door.

- "So? You wanna swim with us?"

- "I don't know...I'm not very good at it, and all this water...I don't feel okay with that..."

- "It's fine, relax," reassured the redhead. "You can put your swimsuit and stayed next to the pool, sunbathing."

- "Sunbathing?" frowned El.

- "Yeah, you lay down on a deckchair and let the sun tan your skin. You can read magazines too if you want. And then, if you feel more comfortable, you can join us, you know we won't bother you, but it's as you want."

El nodded and smiled to her, making her blush a bit. But she had a surprised face when El put her hand on her forehead.

- "What are you doing?" frowned Max.

- "You were red, I wanted to be sure you hadn't fever," answered softly El.

- "I'm fine," reassured the redhead.

She took her hand and put it away from her face, without letting it go. She stared at their two hands a moment, lightly rubbing it with her thumb.

- "Which one?" asked El.

- "What?" frowned Max.

- "Which swimsuit? I took two but I don't know which one I should wear."

- "Oh! Show me."

El went in the bathroom to put her first suit, while Max was trying to

contain all her excitement. El came back and Max still couldn't believe how good looking she was!

- "Wow!" exclaimed the redhead.

- "Is it great?"

- "Yeah, yeah! Absolutely!"

- "Cool. It's my favorite one," told shyly El.

- "You don't like the other one?"

- "Not that much but..."

- "But what?"

- "It's Mike who bought it for me so...I think he would prefer me to wear the one he gave me..."

- "But, you don't like it, right?"

- "No, not really, but I don't want to upset him."

- "If you tell him politely he will understand, believe me. Don't torture yourself with a swimsuit, you're supposed to have fun! He won't care if he sees how happy you are to be with us," reassured the redhead with a heavy heart.

El had a big smile. It was hurtful to defend Mike, but it was worth it if there was a smile after it. Max changed, and the two girls put their clothes on before leaving the room. They arrived on the principal deck and saw all the teens around or inside the pool. Max knew that El wasn't comfortable in public, especially with loud teens jumping everywhere, so she grabbed her hand and squeezed it.

- "You're okay?" asked Max.

- "Yeah, it's fine", weakly smiled El.

- "Don't worry, if someone bothers you, I'll kick their ass."

El chuckled and felt better. The two girls approached the pool, El

choosing a deckchair, and Max taking off her clothes.

- "You're sure you're okay?"

- "Yeah, it's fine, go to swim," reassured El.

Max nodded, and waved to her before jumping in the pool, wetting the three boys who were half in the water.

- "Max!" grumbled Mike.

- "What!? You're such an old grandpa!" stated Max with an upset tone.

- "I'm not! I just prefer taking my time!"

- "Then take your time Michael! But don't force the young people to be as boring as you!"

The black-haired boy clenched his jaw but didn't answer. He watched the redhead go away, swimming, while he was still boiling inside.

- "She is so annoying, thank you for that!"

- "What!? Why would it be my fault!?" frowned Lucas.

- "It's you who became friend with her, not me!"

- "No, you, you were crying over a girl who weren't even there! For a year!"

- "Oh yeah, sorry for having feelings for a girl who risked her life for our asses! You have no esteem for her!"

- "We have! We're not the one forbidding her to talk or choose something!"

- "I know her by heart!"

- "So it means she can't talk anymore!? That's bullshit, and she'll be done with that, believe me!"

- "Oh yeah!? You really wanna give me advice about relationship

mister I got my ass dumped so many times that I can't count it on my fingers!?"

- "I think I'm a better boyfriend than you," affirmed Lucas.

- "Whatever! She is still annoying!" continued Mike.

Lucas shook his head in disbelief, before going near his friend.

- "When is he gonna understand that she has nothing to do with us!?"

- "She is cool," said shyly Will.

- "What!? You too!?"

- "I mean, you never talked to her politely, she is nice with us, she just have her personality."

- "I don't care, I don't understand why you all like her this much!"

- "We just do, let it go! And they're right about El, we can see on her face that she is annoyed by your behavior."

- "What do you know about her!? You weren't even there!"

Will got surprised by his reaction. Mike always defended people before, no matter what, but now, he was so stubborn and mean with everyone, he didn't even know why! He didn't try anything and got out of the pool, not really enjoying it. Mike stayed alone while Will sat next to El.

- "Is everything okay?" the girl asked.

- "Yeah, just some argues between Mike and Max."

- "Oh, again..."

- "Yeah...how is it with him?" Will asked.

- "It's...normal, why?" she frowned.

- "I don't know...he's been rude lately, I was wondering if he was like that with you."

- "No, he talks a lot, but he is not rude, he buys me things, hugs me, and kisses me, that's all."

- "Okay, it's good for you," the boy smiled.

- "Is there a problem?"

- "No, it's just, he is not the same with you and with us, and I don't know why, I don't know which one is the real Mike."

El nodded.

- "Are you happy with him?"

- "Um, yeah, I mean, I guess," she shrugged.

- "You guess? It doesn't sound good."

- "Why?"

- "I don't know, you don't seem sure to be happy with him, and I wonder why you're still with him."

- "He took care of me."

- "And? You saved me, it doesn't mean we have to date."

- "Yeah..."

- "I hope I didn't break something."

- "No, don't worry," she smiled.

Will smiled, but he knew he made her doubt when her smile faded, and her eyes were staring into space.

El was lost, she didn't know what to think about Mike because with her he was fine, but with everyone else he was awful and disrespectful. She didn't even know what love was, he kissed her, and that was all, they were in love since this. But what did she know about love? She was only eleven years old, running away from a lab, discovering a new world.

Will saw that she was preoccupied, so he took a magazine and began to read it with her.

After a moment, all the teens left the pool, joining El and Will.

- "We should check how Dustin is," Lucas told.
- "Go on if you want," Max answered.
- "What a good friend!" Mike told with an upset tone.
- "Leave her alone," El intervened. "She is my friend."
- "But she is annoying!"
- "Then, she is my annoying friend," the girl joked.
- "And I'm proud of this status," Max smiled.

The two girls looked at each other, lightly chuckling. They stayed a moment under the sun, before all going to their cabins, taking some rest. El laid down on her bed, falling asleep, while Max was sitting on hers, reading a magazine, her back against the wall. She tried to focus on what she was reading, but her eyes kept looking at El. She was so cute, Max wanted to lay down next to her and cuddle her. But she couldn't, she was with this asshole of Mike! Every time she was thinking of them together, she was feeling her heart breaking, not understanding what he had more than her. She stood, let a note, and left the cabin. She knocked at Lucas and Will's cabin before entering, and laying on Will's bed, under the surprised eyes of her friends.

- "Um...is everything okay?" asked Lucas.
- "Yes...I needed a break..." sighed Max.
- "A break? With El?" frowned Will.
- "Or, a break with your feelings for her?" smirked the black boy.

Max quickly straightened and watched him with lost eyes.

- "What are you talking about?" replied slowly the redhead.



- "Come on Max, you've heart eyes when you look at her!"
- "And you blush," added Will.
- "Fuck! You're so clueless usually! How did you understand!?"
- "It's Will who understood first, he then told us to be sure he wasn't crazy."
- "Us!? Tell me it's just you and Dustin!"
- "Of course, I wouldn't tell Mike, or El," said Will.

Max sighed loudly with her mouth, laying down again on the bed. She didn't know if she was relieved or worried. Because, if they noticed, El certainly noticed too! No, El was the most clueless person ever! But Mike...it was certainly because of this that he hated her this much! She didn't know...all she knew was that her feelings kept growing, knowing she had no chance, and it was hurting a lot.

- "I should go back," told Max.
- "You can stay here if you want," answered Will.
- "No, it's almost time for dinner, I don't want her to stress because she is alone, she is not used to being on a boat."
- "Okay, good luck," smiled softly Lucas.

Max nodded like to thank him, before leaving. She still couldn't believe they knew! At least, they didn't seem to have a problem with it, it was a good news. When she arrived in the cabin, El was sitting on her bed, staring into space with sad eyes.

- "Are you okay?" asked the redhead with a concern tone.
- "Yeah...It's just...it's the first time I've been far from home..."
- "Oh, okay, it's normal, don't worry, it's your first trip-"
- "Not really, when I went in Chicago, it was a trip, right?"
- "Um...yeah, of course, but the circumstances were different...I

guess...you were looking for a place to belong, that's why you weren't scared, but now, you belong in Hawkins so, when you're far, you're certainly worried to lose it."

Max didn't know what to say. She had never been good at this kind of conversation, but she really wanted to help El to feel better, even if it was clumsy.

- "You're certainly right," told El.

- "Really!? Oh, I mean, yeah, it's certainly that."

El lightly chuckled, which made race Max's heart.

- "It's time for dinner. Hungry?"

- "Yes," smiled El.

The two girls got ready before going to the cafeteria. This time, Dustin didn't take too much, he even almost didn't eat, still feeling sick. But Max didn't care. Mike kept kissing El all the time, caressing her arm, and doing all those things that she wanted to do too. She was sure he knew and was doing all of this in purpose in front of her to make her jealous. No, she couldn't begin to think like that, he wasn't responsible of her feelings, she couldn't blame him.

Lucas noticed that she was feeling bad and tried to make her laugh by putting two French fries in his nose and imitating a sea lion. It made laugh the table. Max thought it was a bit disgusting but laughed too. She was glad to have her friends to support her and make her feel better, things were hard enough. She even gave him her dessert to thank him. Once the dinner over, they all went to bed, joining their dreams.

## 2. Movie night

The two girls were woken up by knocks at their door. Max opened her eyes with difficulties, wondering who could be here at 7. The person stopped so the two girls put again their heads on their pillows.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

Max grumbled some inaudible things before angrily standing and going to the door. When she opened it, she had the bad surprise to see Mike behind it, losing his smile when he saw her and not his girlfriend.

- "It must be an emergency, or you're dead!"
- "I'm not here for you!" replied Mike.
- "I know! We were sleeping before your stupid face decided it was cool to wake us up!"
- "I want to talk to my girlfriend, if you don't mind!?"
- "I mind, because we're sharing a room, which mean if you wake her up, you wake me up, and you have to deal with this!"
- "Move!"
- "No!"

Mike tried to enter, but Max put her hand on his chest and pushed him away.

- "Go away now!" ordered the redhead before slamming the door.

If there was one person she didn't want to see, or hear, on waking, it was him. She loudly sighed with her mouth, looking at El, who had small eyes.

- "I'm sorry," apologized the redhead. "If you wanna join him, you can, you do what you want!"

- "I'll see him later, it's too early," answered El with a hoarse voice.

- "Definitely. The cafeteria is not even opened!"

El lightly chuckled.

- "Just go back to sleep, I don't think he'll come back."

- "He shouldn't! Or I kill him!"

El smiled to her and grabbed her hand to bring her closer, forcing her to go in her bed. Max let her do it, she wasn't complaining of the situation, and she was used to sleeping with her, every time they had a sleepover they were sleeping in the same bed. But she thought it was kinda not really right toward her, she was feeling like if she was using those situations to enjoy it whereas El didn't know.

El wrapped her arm around the redhead's waist and put her head on her shoulder, closing her eyes. She never slept with Mike, after all this time, none of them stayed a night with the other one in a bed. Hopper wasn't really liking the boy, and El could understand why, he was always rude and mocking him, not in a nice way, going too far most of the time.

The two girls reopened their eyes two hours after, still cuddling each other. El even placed a small kiss on Max's cheek as a good morning, making melt the redhead's heart. She was glad it was not bright, hiding her red face.

- "How was your first night on a boat?" asked Max.

- "Not bad," answered El with a sleepy tone.

- "If Mike hadn't woken us up—"

- "It wasn't this bad, I slept better with you than alone."

- "Oh, really?"

- "Yeah, I mean, we always sleep together, I'm certainly used to it now. You didn't like it?"

- "I did like it, I like sleeping with you," confessed Max, trying to hold her feelings inside.

- "Cool," smiled El.

El put again her head on Max, tightening the hug. The redhead could feel her hot breathing caressing her neck, provoking pleasant goosebumps. She was glad El didn't jump of the bed to go to breakfast, Max was enjoying it too much to let it go so fast. She had El just for her. She felt a bit bad, like if she was stealing her away from Mike. Well, it wasn't like if they were kissing, or something like that, they were just cuddling, like they always did. Yeah, it was, sadly, nothing more...

Half an hour later, El was hungry so the girls got out of the bed, and got ready. When they arrived at the cafeteria, Will, Lucas, and Dustin were already there, eating and talking.

- "Hey girls," greeted the curly-haired boy with a smile.

- "Hey boys," replied Max.

- "Mike is not here?" asked El.

Mike. Why her first question had to be about Mike!? Max tried to not get mad, or jealous. She swallowed her anger and focused on her breakfast.

- "Nah, still sleeping," answered Dustin.

- "Not surprising! Waking us up at seven! What a stupid idea!" grumbled Max.

- "Oh! So that's what he did."

- "Why?" frowned Lucas.

- "He wanted to take a breakfast with me," told El.

The three boys all looked at Max. The redhead killed them with her eyes, not wanting El to suspect anything.

- "Why at seven? It's too early!" stated Will.
- "Yeah, he didn't stay long!" told Max.
- "You didn't kill him, right?" said Lucas.
- "His body is floating on the water," joked El.

The table chuckled, except Lucas who winced at her. The three boys noticed that El seemed more comfortable, participating at the conversation, and having fun. More free, more herself. It was really pleasant. But what the boys noticed more was Max not able to look away from her. The three were convinced she had a chance with her, but they knew she wouldn't try, too scared to ruin everything with El.

After a moment, Mike finally joined them, annoying the redhead. The black-haired boy decided to sit between El and Max, irritating the redhead, and annoying a bit El. Mike wrapped his arm around his girlfriend and kissed her lips.

- "We've heard you've got a knock back," mocked Dustin.
- "It's because of Max! She didn't let me in!" replied angrily Mike.
- "Of course I didn't! We were asleep!"
- "You could have told El I was here!"
- "She knew!"
- "And you convinced her to stay with you instead of me!?"
- "I didn't do anything! I told her she could go with you if she wanted, but she preferred staying to sleep!"
- "I know you forced her to stay!"
- "She didn't!" intervened El.
- "You don't have to defend her El, I know what kind of person she is!" told Mike.
- "But she didn't do anything! I just wanted to sleep, that's all!"

- "You preferred staying with her than me!? Really!?"
- "I, I, I..."
- "Yeah, I see!"
- "Dude, she just wanted to sleep, relax!" said Dustin.
- "Relax!? She chose a fucking bed than her own boyfriend!? And you want me to relax!?"
- "Yes! Because there is nothing wrong with that!" intervened Lucas.
- "You know what!? Fuck you all! You're always taking her side, no matter what! (stands and looks at El) I'm disappointed."

The young girl had a sad face, feeling ashamed. Mike shook his head in disbelief before walking away.

- "Mike!" called El.

She stood and walked quickly behind him, trying to catch him up, letting the four other teens at the table.

- "I hope she'll kick his ass."
- "Max!" told Lucas in shock.
- "What!? You heard him!? He wants to make her feel guilty for taking some rest! This is toxic!"
- "She is right, I don't even know why they're still together," added Dustin.
- "Because he took care of her," intervened Will.
- "What!?" frowned the redhead.

- "I talked to her yesterday, she doesn't know what love is, I mean, especially when he kissed her the first time! She was still very young, out of a lab where she was a toy, under the influence of everyone, and the first guy she met kissed her, you don't know what kind of impact it can have on someone like El, I don't think it's a good thing,

and Mike treated her like if she should forever owe him this, whereas we all should be the one owing her something."

What Will said was right, El had always been, and was still, psychologically and emotionally fragile, and the way Mike was treating her was completely wrong.

El finally caught up her boyfriend in the corridors.

- "Mike! Wait!"

- "What do you want!?" replied the boy.

- "I want you to calm down! You don't need to be so angry!" told El.

- "I'm not angry, okay!? I'm just fucking disappointed by you! I'm not no one!"

- "But I never said that!"

- "Why didn't you come with me this morning then!?"

- "I was tired! I just wanted to sleep, to not be tired while I would be with you today," said softly the girl.

- "Really?" frowned Mike who calmed down.

- "Of course! What do you think? You're my boyfriend, I get it."

El placed her hands on his shoulders, wanting to relax him. Mike clenched his jaw but nodded. He leaned to kiss, and smiled. He wrapped his arm around her shoulder, and the two lovebirds began to walk slowly in the corridors, enjoying the moment.

Will, Max, Lucas, and Dustin finished their breakfast. The four friends decided to go on the principal deck to watch the water. There was a bit music, the sun wasn't too hot, it was pleasant. They sat at a table and began to play cards.

- "Max! Stop cheating!" grumbled Dustin.

- "I'm not! I'm just better than all of you!"



- "It's not possible! You won four games straight!"
- "Which is funny, knowing...your...crush...for..."
- "We got it Lucas!" cut quickly the redhead.
- "Just sayin'!"
- "Say it less loud, I don't want everyone to know!"
- "Sorry," pouted the black boy.
- "It's fine, let's just play."

The friends began another game, but Max saw a bit further El and Mike arriving, hand in hand, the boy's head on the girl's head. Max clenched her jaw and felt her heart tensing. She couldn't believe that El was still with him after how he treated her! The two lovebirds sat next to them, but Max didn't look at them, too mad.

- "You wanna play with us?" asked Will.
- "No, she doesn't know how to play," answered Mike.
- "She can learn," told Dustin.
- "No, we're good."
- "Then, you could both fucking leave!?" replied sharply Max.
- "We do what we want!"
- "No, you both do what YOU (points Mike) want!"
- "We wanna stay with our friends!"
- "Have fun then!"

Max angrily stood and walked away, not supporting this situation anymore. She needed some time alone, to think and to calm down, so she went directly in her cabin.

- "She is mad at me?" asked El.

- "No, she is always mad at everyone!" answered Mike.
- "It's not you El, don't worry," reassured Will.
- "Yeah, she is certainly tired," added Lucas.
- "You're implying it's my fault!?" said angrily the black-haired boy.
- "I'm not implying anything! "
- "Whatever!"
- "I should maybe talk to her," told El.
- "Give her some time, to calm down," said softly Dustin.

El nodded and sat again. She was sure Max was mad because of Mike. She didn't know why he had to wake them up this early, now Max was tired and upset because of this. But she followed Dustin advice. She waited several minutes before going to her cabin. She slowly opened her door and saw Max on her bed, staring into space.

- "Um...are you okay?" asked shyly El.
- "Yeah. I'm fine."
- "If I said something—"
- "No you didn't, of course you didn't because it's Mike who talks for you!" stated Max, straightening.
- "Okay, I know you've a problem with him, but it doesn't mean you can talk to me like that!"
- "Why not!? When it's Mike it doesn't seem to bother you!"

El felt hurt by those words. She didn't notice that Mike was talking to her in a wrong way. She knew he could be angry, but not mean. Maybe Max was just over-reacting.

- "You're tired, I get it."
- "Yeah...just go away," sighed Max.

- "I'm sorry," apologized El.

- "It's not your fault, just, just leave me alone, and spend your day with your damn boyfriend, like every fucking day."

- "Okay...I let you with your thoughts."

El left the cabin, a bit hurt by all of this. Max laid down again on her bed, hating herself. She didn't know why she was rude with her, but she didn't want to see her right now, she just wanted to be alone.

Soft knocks woke her up. She had a start, not remembering falling asleep, before looking around, trying to know where she was.

- "It's open!" told the redhead.

The door opened, and Will appeared with a bag in his hands.

- "I thought you could be hungry," smiled the young boy.

- "Uh, not that much."

- "It's fine, I can put it on your nightstand, in case you're hungry later."

Will placed the bag on the nightstand and sat next to his friend.

- "How are you?" asked softly the boy.

- "Dying."

- "Yeah, love is hard."

- "Especially when you're close friend with."

- "She is sad."

- "What?" frowned Max.

- "Because you're mad, and she doesn't know why, she is sad because you're not okay. She even yelled at Mike because he was mocking you."

- "What a cunt. I hate how he treats her."
- "Yeah, he is weird, it's like there are two Mikes, I don't understand why she is still with him."
- "Because she doesn't understand. She was raised like that, being a toy to people, when she met him, she became his toy, and now, she doesn't know what to do with it."
- "Maybe she just loves him," shrugged Will.
- "Or maybe she thinks she loves him," sighed the redhead. "I thought it would pass."
- "What? Mike and El?"
- "No, my feelings. I thought it was just a phase, but, it kept growing..."
- "And sleeping with her is not helping!"
- "Clearly not!"
- "It's the first time I have seen you in love," stated Will.
- "Maybe because it's the first time I've been! But why her!? It's stupid."
- "It's not, and you know it."
- "Yeah...I hate me for this."
- "Don't, you can't control feelings! And maybe she loves you!" said Will.
- "Pfff, don't be stupid, we both know she doesn't."
- "I'm not that sure, neither are Dustin and Lucas."
- "Don't give me false hope, I don't need that," told Max with an upset tone.

Will pinched his lips together, thinking it wasn't a false hope, but

didn't insist. Max was struggling enough with her feelings and wouldn't feel better until El and Mike broke up. Max sat and took the bag to see what the boy brought. It was a chocolate muffin. The girl decided to share it with him, while showing him the new coming video games the next year.

In the middle of the afternoon, the two teens decided to take some air and to walk through the boat. They found Dustin and Lucas at the arcade, still playing at Super Mario Bros.

- "Where are Mike and El?" asked Will.

- "Eating each other's faces, certainly," answered Lucas, focused on the screen.

- "You're feeling better?" told Dustin.

- "Yeah, I slept a bit, and Will gave me food, everything I need to be happy!" joked Max.

The curly-haired boy chuckled and gave her a friendly tap on her shoulder. The friends watched Lucas fighting with his game and miserably losing. He grumbled some inaudible things before leaving the arcade, followed by his friends, all mocking him.

- "This game sucks, I prefer Dragon Lair's, that's a real game!" stated Lucas with an angry tone.

- "It's not the game which sucks, and Super Mario Bros is amazing! There are so much more levels! I think it's my new favorite game," told Dustin. "What about you?"

- "Dig Dug, still and forever," answered Max.

- "Only because you've the best score on every machines you meet."

- "Of course!"

The friends chuckled.

- "What about you Will?"

- "Well, I think Dragon Lair's is a good game and, we spent so many times on it, for me it gave me some nostalgia."

- "Yeah, he preferred the time when I wasn't there," joked Max.

- "No, of course not," chuckled the boy, gently pushing her. "But it was good old days, and you're part of those good old days."

- "Good save."

Will, Dustin, Lucas, and Max went on the principal deck, and sat at a table with a nice view. They ordered ice creams with some drinks and began to play cards. They spent the afternoon there, having fun together, clearing the redhead's head.

Tonight, it was movie night, so the friends went early to have the best places. When they arrived, El and Mike were already there. Max decided to sit next to her friend to reassure her, not wanting her to think she was mad at her. El greeted her with a big smile.

- "Did you sleep?" asked softly El.

- "Yeah, don't worry, I'm feeling better," reassured Max.

- "Cool, I was worried."

- "I know, I'm sorry for being this rude..."

- "It's fine, I understand." smiled the girl. "We could, if you want, sleep together again tonight? What do you think?"

- "Um, yeah, sounds good."

- "Nice, I like sleeping with you."

El intertwined her fingers with Max's before putting her head on her boyfriend's shoulder. The redhead had to focus a lot to not become red, but the sensation in her stomach was so pleasant that she wouldn't let go this hand for anything in this world. The girl could feel the three boys's eyes on her, so she turned her head and mouthed:

- "She is holding my hand!"

Like if it wasn't something regular. Well, it was, because when the redhead understood her feelings, she tried to keep a certain distance with El, so holding hands became less and less a habit. The three boys smiled to her, with their thumbs up, like to encourage her and tell her it was a good thing. Maybe Will was right, she had a chance. But she didn't want to have too much hope, to not be hurt too much when El and Mike got married.

They spent all the movie holding hands, El caressing the back of Max's hand with her thumb. The redhead didn't listen to the movie, she didn't even remember what the plot was. She was too focus on this moment, not wanting to think of something else, or being distracted. After a moment, El's hand became a bit weak. Max turned her head, and noticed that the girl fell asleep on Mike's shoulder. The redhead kept the hand, it was hurting anyone, so she could enjoy it a bit.

At the end of the movie, El woke up in a small start and looked around, not sure to know where she was. She felt Max's hand in hers and remembered where she was. She smiled to her friend, letting her hand in hers. All the teens stood, going to their cabins. Max was surprised to not see Mike's arm around El's shoulder, the young girl didn't even wait for him. Max didn't ask, not wanting El to feel guilty for this and joining him. They arrived in their cabin, and both laid down in El's bed, Max holding tight her friend in her arms, before falling asleep.

### 3. Museum

When the redhead opened her eyes, she met two big brown marbles at a few centimeters of her face. El smiled to her as a good morning, making blush Max.

- "When are we supposed to arrive at the island?" asked El.

Max turned her head to her watch. It was 8 AM, only.

- "Um, in two hours, I guess."

- "Cool, we can do nothing for two hours."

- "You don't wanna eat?" frowned the redhead.

- "I don't wanna move," sighed El.

Max rolled a bit and reached her nightstand. She took the bag, took off a rest of muffin -that Will brought her the day before- and held it out to her friend.

- "You want a piece?" proposed El.

- "Why not," smiled Max.

The two girls shared their breakfast, staying in the bed. El put her head on Max's shoulder, wrapping her arms around her waist. Why did they have to visit this island? It was perfect like that, Max didn't want it to end.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

- "If it's Mike..!"

- "Let's just ignore it," said El.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK...

- "I go," told El.

The girl got out of the bed and slowly opened the door, a bit dazzled



by the light of the corridor. She still managed to recognize her boyfriend.

- "Um...hi," said El.

- "Hey, how are you?" smiled the boy.

- "Sleepy."

- "Yeah, um, I was wondering if you wanted to eat breakfast with me."

- "Uh, we already ate a muffin," explained the girl.

- "What!?"

- "Don't scream, it's too early," grumbled El.

- "You preferred eating with Max than me!?"

- "I didn't know you were going to ask me for breakfast!"

- "I did it yesterday! And I even let you sleeping one more hour!"

- "What a prince," mumbled El. "Give me a minute, to wear something!"

- "Thank you."

El closed the door and sighed loudly with her mouth.

- "You're really going with him!?" told Max.

- "He is my boyfriend, he just wants to spend some time with me, that's all," answered El, putting her clothes on.

- "He ALWAYS spends time with you, we barely saw you yesterday because you were with him!"

- "It's just a breakfast, it's gonna be fast."

- "Yeah, it's just a breakfast, then it's just a day, then it's just a life! You don't have to if you don't want to!"

- "It's fine, don't worry, and it's kinda cute."
- "Yeah!? If I ask you to stay with me here, you'll think it's cute!?"
- "Of course," smiled El.
- "..."
- "I'll be fast."

El waved to her before leaving the cabin. Max wasn't expecting El to answer her that! Her cheeks were burning, and her stomach was flying. Even if she knew it wasn't because she was in love, it was still pleasant to hear. She was less mad but more frustrated, El still chose Mike over her.

As she was awake, she decided to get ready. She had no reason to stay in bed anyway. Once ready, she put some stuff in her bag for the day and left the cabin. She didn't know where exactly she was going, but she needed to take some air. On her way, she met Dustin.

- "Hey MadMax," smiled the boy.
- "Hey, what are you doing?" told the redhead.
- "I was going to see if Will and Lucas were awake, to eat breakfast. Wanna come?"
- "Uh, well...I don't know..."
- "What's wrong?"
- "Nothing," answered too quickly Max. "Let's go."

Dustin wrapped his arm around her shoulders and took her with him. They arrived near Lucas and Will's cabin and saw the two boys getting out of it. The four friends walked to the cafeteria, took something to eat, and sat at a table. A bit further, El and Mike were sat next to each other, lost in a long and passionate kiss.

- "Ew, do we have to witness this while we're eating!?" grumbled Lucas.

- "Oh, that's why you didn't wanna come..." stated Dustin.
- "It's fine, I've to get used to it," sighed Max.
- "I'm sorry..."
- "Did you tell her?" asked Will.
- "Tell her what?" frowned the redhead.
- "About your feelings."
- "Why would I do that!?"
- "It could work."
- "It can't work, I'm not the one she loves."
- "That's it? You give up?" told Lucas.
- "We're friends, it's already great! I'm gonna find someone else to love."

The three boys pouted while Max was trying to look away, not wanting them to see her sadness, and not wanting to see El and Mike making out. Lucas looked at the two lovebirds and noticed that El seemed a bit bored, not really caring of what Mike was talking about. When he met her eyes, he made a small wave to her, which she answered, and made a movement with his hand to ask her if she wanted to come with them. She shrugged and showed Mike with her hand before lightly mocking for talking too much with her hands. The black boy smiled, amused, but insisted. The girl turned to her boyfriend and talked to him. After a small debate, the two teens stood, and approached the table. El didn't sit next to Mike, but next to Max.

- "What's up?" smiled Dustin.
- "I'm tired," sighed El.
- "Tell them it's my fault!" grumbled Mike.

- "I was good in my bed with Max."

The redhead blushed, not really knowing where to look.

- "Oh, with Max," smirked Lucas.

- "Yeah, we slept together, you never do that?" frowned El.

- "No, well, sometimes."

- "If you could stop, it would be great," intervened sharply Mike.

- "Why? We like sleeping with each other!"

- "Yeah, I've no doubt on it."

Mike gave an angry glare at the redhead whose face was more than red of embarrassment. She felt El's hand on her forehead and quickly removed it.

- "Stop doing that!" mumbled Max.

- "I wanted to be sure you hadn't fever."

- "Oh, fever! She has fever, love fever," joked Dustin.

- "Love fever?" frowned El.

- "It's nothing, don't listen to him," intervened Will, seeing his friend's embarrassment.

- "Uh...okay."

Lucas shook his head in disbelief in direction of Dustin, while Mike was killing the redhead with his eyes. El didn't think more about this love fever and put her head on Max's shoulder, wrapped her arms around the other girl's arm, looking at the horizon. Max was so uncomfortable and happy at the same time. She looked up at the four boys, Will, Lucas, and Dustin smiling to her, and Mike shaking his head and clenching his jaw. The redhead showed El with her hand, to tell him she didn't ask anything.

- "Get out of her!" mouthed the boy.

- "No!" whispered the redhead.

- "Do it!"

Max shook her head to say no and showed him her middle finger. Mike began to throw her some pieces of cake of Will, while the girl kept showing him her middle finger without fading.

- "We should take a walk, right El?" asked sharply Mike.

- "Why? We're going to walk the entire day! We're good here!" answered El.

- "Because I said so!"

- "What does that mean!? If she doesn't wanna go, she doesn't have to! She is not a fucking toy!" replied Max.

- "Said the girl who uses her as a soft toy!"

- "She is not my soft toy!"

- "She is not your girlfriend either!"

Nobody answered. Max remained silent, not daring to look at El. Mike kept killing Max with his eyes. Dustin, Will, and Lucas looked at each other, not knowing what to say.

- "She could be," smiled El.

- "What!?" exclaimed all the boys.

- "Yes, I mean, she is amazing, who wouldn't want to be her girlfriend? It's not possible."

- "I wouldn't!" told angrily Mike.

- "It's because we're together, but if I wasn't there, I'm sure you would."

- "And I'm sure not!"

- "Really? Well, it gives me more chances!"

- "Wait, you're really going to date Max!?"

- "I can't, I'm with you, a relationship it's between two persons, right?" frowned the brunette.

- "Yeah, but...I'm lost."

- "Well, I don't know if I said something stupid, but I'm going to get my bag ready now. Don't mock me too much."

El stood and walked away. Mike didn't say anything and walked away too. Max was frowning hard, a bit dazed by all of this.

- "I don't think she understood what she said," told Max.

- "Or maybe she did! Which would be amazing!" stated Will.

- "It's El, she is the most clueless person ever! She certainly said that just to bother him!"

- "I don't know, it was weird, and El is not very good at human interaction, I'm not even sure she knows what kind of love it is to be with a girlfriend or boyfriend," pouted Dustin.

- "Exactly! That's why I don't wanna take everything she says too seriously, she could just want to be nice and nothing more!"

- "Yeah, but I'm not sure she loves Mike. She likes him, but doesn't love him, she is always bored when he talks to her, and, when she goes with him, she seemed to do it just to not upset him, not because she wants it," added Lucas.

- "Yeah, I noticed that too," said Will. "I still have hope for you."

- "Well, I don't!" told Max.

The redhead sighed loudly with her mouth, tired by this situation. They began to see a bit of the island, so the four friends decided to watch the boat approaching the earth. The three boys were lost in a debate to know how long it would take to the boat to arrive. Max didn't participate, not really caring, or just to bother them, but was amused by them beginning an improbable calculation.

- "See! Thirty minutes!" told Dustin.
- "No! You failed the equation!" said Lucas.
- "No, I didn't!"
- "Yes you did! (tries to take the pen) Let me show you!"
- "There is nothing to show me! I know I'm right!"

Lucas tried again to take the pen, but Dustin kept it away from him. While they were fighting, Dustin lost his balance, dropping the pen and the paper in the water.

- "Well, mathematics is over!" stated Max. "So sad. Let's go!"
- "You have no respect for our work," told Dustin.
- "Nope! It was all wrong anyway. And who cares to know that!? You're the only persons able to do it."
- "Don't be jealous of our talent," said Lucas.
- "Yeah, if you want," chuckled the redhead.

The girl went away, joining the other teens waiting, followed by her friends. It took fifteen minutes for the boat to arrive, which meant it was Will who was right, and Max didn't stop heaping praise on the young boy, especially to bother Lucas and Dustin. Mr. Clarke counted all the teens and asked them to stay together during the visit. The party stayed in group, even El and Mike were with them. They began the visit with a walk on a dirt path, showing the forest, and explaining the story of the island.

- "Look! Mushrooms! You think I can eat them?" told Dustin.
- "If you wanna die, go on, I'm watching," answered Max.
- "Why I would die?"
- "You don't know which mushrooms they are, why would you take the risk to be sick, or worse!"

- "I don't know, 'could be fun," smiled the curly-haired boy.
- "If you're sick, stay away from me."
- "And you will be," stated El.
- "How do you know that?" frowned Mike.
- "I live in a forest, dad showed me some mushrooms, and the ones to not eat, those ones were part of them."
- "Oh...thanks for saving my life!" said Dustin.
- "You should have let him, it would have been entertaining!" joked Max.

El chuckled, playfully pushing her friend. Mike, seeing the interaction and not appreciating it, grabbed El's hand, and took her closer to him. Max shook her head in disbelief to him, not believing his stupidity. And this was when the lovebirds stayed away from the other teens.

- "She is so annoying," stated Mike.
- "Max? I think she is funny," answered El.
- "She is always doing the same kind of jokes, she could be original a bit! Those jokes are not even funny!"
- "It's her humor, and I laughed."
- "Yes, because you didn't want to upset her, because she is annoying when she is upset! Always complaining, and blaming everyone for everything!"
- "That's not true, she is not blaming people, she just jokes, and it's cute when she complains."
- "Cute!? You think she is cute!? She is horrible! Have you seen her!? Empty eyes, dirty hair, weird body—"
- "Stop! Do you hear you!? You're awful! Stop talking about her like



that! You don't like her, it's a fact, but it doesn't mean you can take her down like this! She is my friend! I love her the way she is! That's all! So stop talking or—"

- "Or what!?"

- "You know, I dumped your ass one time, and sometime, I wonder why I came back."

El took off her hand from his and walked away, joining the others.

- "Is everything okay?" asked Lucas with a concerned tone.

- "Yeah, yeah..." sighed El.

The four friends pouted at each other, knowing she just had an argue with Mike. They kept walking, not insisting on it.

- "You don't have dirty hair," told El.

- "What?" frowned Max.

- "Your hair, it's not dirty."

- "Um...thanks, I guess. It's a weird compliment, but, I'm not gonna try to understand why you say that."

- "Mike told that you have dirty hair, but it's not true."

- "Oh! You argued because of me!?"

- "Yeah, he was saying horrible things about you, and false by the way, I'm so done with this, it's always like that. Every time you say or do something, you can be sure Mike will complain about it."

- "Oh, what an asshole!" told Max, not believing him.

- "Yeah, he can be sometime."

- "Hey, don't be sad. He'll come back."

- "But, I don't know if I want him to. I'm tired of his behavior toward you, I don't know why he is always like that, and I can't spend time

with all of you or Mike will become awful and all."

- "You wanna break up with him?"

- "I...I don't know...I need to think about it."

- "Well, if you need advice, you can ask me, but I'm not sure I'm the right person for this."

- "Don't be stupid, you always have good advice," smiled El.

Max didn't resist to her smile and felt a blush growing on her cheeks. She was such a mess, she couldn't believe how sensitive she was around El. The two girls kept walking together, letting the four boys behind. Max was happy, she loved having her moment with El, it was always good times. When they finished the walk, they arrived near a museum. The teachers gave them a plan of the place and some questions to answer before letting them visit by themselves. The group of friends began the visit, following the directions. Mike stayed behind, still mad at Max. At a moment, he grabbed his girlfriend's arm, and brought her aside of the group.

- "What!?" replied El with an upset tone.

- "I want to apologize," told the boy.

- "Yeah, like always! You always say that you will make effort, but you never do!"

- "But this time it's true!"

- "Because last time it was a lie!? Just to get me back!?"

- "Wh—No! It's not what I meant, it's just, I don't wanna lose you!"

- "Then stop acting like an asshole!" stated El.

- "I'm, I'm gonna try, but if you don't spend all your time with her, it will be easier!" said Mike.

- "I won't stop seeing her! I already barely see her, less is never!"

- "Which shouldn't be a problem! It's her or me!"
- "Then it's her."
- "What!? Why!?"
- "Because she never asked me to choose between you and her."
- "...So, it's over?" asked weakly the boy.
- "Yes Mike, it's over," answered El with a sad voice.
- "Just because of her!?"
- "No Mike, because of you. I'm tired of listening to you talking about her like that, keeping me away from my friends, it's like if I'm not allowed to spend time with other people than you, I'm done."
- "But—"
- "No, I don't tell that because I'm angry, it's been a while I think of this. I tried to give you a chance, but it's still the same. I need more, I want more, I don't want to stay aside of my friends because you think one of them is annoying, I'm not yours, I'm mine."

Mike stayed dazed. He wasn't expecting this from her, especially after all this time and everything that happened to them. He thought it would last forever. El gave a last small kiss on his cheek, before walking away. She wandered alone in the museum, lost in her thoughts. She just ended a three years old relationship, just like that, with only three words. Nothing more. She just broke his heart with only three words. And she wasn't regretting it. She was feeling bad for him, but it was like if a big weight disappeared from her heart. She wasn't sad, she wasn't feeling guilty, she was just empty, not really realizing it.

- "El?"

The young girl was cut in her thoughts. She came back to reality and turned her head to see Dustin looking at her with a frown.

- "Are you okay?"

- "Yeah..." weakly smiled the girl.
- "Why are you alone?"
- "Just, watching the paintings. And you?"
- "Lucas, Will, and Max began a boring debate about the statue of I don't know who!"

El had a small chuckle, but with a sad smile.

- "You're sure you're okay?" insisted softly Dustin.
- "Yeah...I think I just broke up with Mike..."
- "Oh! Are you okay?"
- "I don't know," sighed El. "It's...weird. I'm like, I don't know, not here. Is it normal?"
- "Maybe, leaving someone is always hard, especially after a story like yours. You wanna talk about it?"
- "I don't know what to say..."
- "You don't have to, if you don't want. We could just hang in the museum and finished the work together, what do you think?" proposed the boy with a smile.
- "Yeah, sounds good."

Dustin offered his arm, which she took with pleasure, and walked with his friend through the corridors and the art works. They stopped in front of a statue, looking for the information they needed.

- "I...really don't understand art!" stated Dustin.
- "It's colorful," pouted El.
- "But, it makes no sense!"
- "It's kinda pleasant to watch. Like a rainbow."

- "A weird human shape rainbow! And what's on his head!?"
- "I thought it was a bird, no?"
- "A bird!? It looks like a sheep shit!"
- "A sheep shit?" frowned El.
- "Yeah, a sheep shit."
- "It looks like that?"
- "I don't know, but it's funny to say," smiled Dustin.
- "Yeah, that's true," chuckled the girl.

Dustin lightly laughed with her. He was glad to see her smile, breaking up with Mike was certainly hard, she wasn't really prepared for this, but she had still this happy girl inside, not crying again and again over her ex-boyfriend, it was a good thing. Maybe. He didn't really know, but he was relieved to be able to make her laugh, clearing her head. They finished their work together, before finishing at the gift shop. They looked at all the things they could buy, even if it had no links with the museum. There were soft toys in animals shape, keyrings, and more things like that. El was looking at it without really paying attention, but a keyring caught her attention, so she took it in her hand.

- "Do you think she could like it?" asked El.
- "Who? Max?"
- "Who else?"
- "I don't know. Well, a skateboard, she can't not like it!" told Dustin.

El had a small smile and began to search on herself. She found some coins. She had enough. She went to the cashier with a smile, followed by Dustin. The boy was sure it didn't make her smile for nothing, just thinking of giving a present for Max made her happy. Once bought, the two friends joined the others who were waiting outside.

- "We lost you! Where were you?" asked Lucas.

- "Working together," shrugged Dustin.

- "You found everything?"

- "Barely."

The party joined the other teens of the class. Apparently, Mike didn't tell them that El broke up with him. Maybe he was thinking she would come back. But Dustin was sure she wouldn't, she seemed to feel better since she made this decision. But the situation would be complicated as they had the same friends. Mike stayed behind, while El was with Lucas, Max, and Will, walking in front of them.

- "You're alright?" asked Dustin.

- "Why I wouldn't be!?" replied Mike.

- "I know she broke up with you."

- "She didn't! She just did it because Max convinced her!"

- "Max never tried anything! She has nothing to do with that!"

- "Of course she did! She wants to steal her from me! But it won't work!"

- "She is not stealing her from you, you're pushing her away from you! It's not Max's fault if El decided to stop with you, it's yours! You treated her like shit, and she is done, and I'm happy she broke up with you, she wasn't happy, and you weren't yourself, too scared to lose your toy!"

Dustin didn't let him answer and walked quickly near his friends. Mike was in denial, not understanding that it was a deliberated decision. It was lunch time, so the class stopped in a park to have a picnic. They found a quiet place under a tree and began to eat their sandwiches. Max, Will, Dustin, and Lucas talked normally, noticing that El and Mike were uncomfortable.

- "You had another fight?" asked Lucas, not knowing the situation.

- "It's fine," replied sharply Mike.
- "We broke up," answered El.
- "What!?" exclaimed Will, Max, and Lucas.
- "It's fine! It's just a break!" told angrily the black-haired boy.
- "No, it's not," said El.

Mike clenched his, before standing and walking away. Lucas, Dustin, and Will hesitated, but decided to check how he was, letting the two girls alone.

- "You're okay?" asked Max with a concerned tone.
- "Yeah...better than I thought."
- "I'm sorry..."
- "Don't be, it's fine. It's not the same Mike I met years ago. He wasn't like that before, nicer, funnier, but now, he is just angry and mean. It's better like that," weakly smiled El.
- "Yeah? I'm sorry it ended like that..."
- "I told him to stop being mean, but he never did, not caring enough. Maybe he didn't care about me."
- "He did! He just didn't think it could end with you, I'm sure he was already planning your marriage!"

El lightly chuckled.

- "I've something for you," told El.
- "For me?" frowned Max.

The brunette nodded before holding out the keyring to her. Max gently took it, like if it was fragile, and looked closely at it.

- "Do you like it?" asked shyly El.

- "I love it! It's so nice, thank you!" smiled Max. "I've something for you too."

Max searched on her bag and held out the present. It was a small rainbow colored Teddy bear.

- "A Teddy bear!" said El with child wild opened eyes.

She quickly grabbed it and caressed her cheek with it.

- "It's soft," stated the brunette.

- "I hope it is!"

- "Thank you!"

El put her head on her friend's shoulder, looking at her new toy. Max felt her cheeks blushing, but she didn't care, she was so glad that El broke up with Mike! She would feel better now, more free. The redhead knew that El was sad, and she could understand why, but she was determined to make her smile, she loved it too much.

As there was not this much to visit, the class stayed in the park until the end of the afternoon before going back on the boat. El wanted to stay alone, so she walked in the boat corridors with no real goals. She stopped on a deck, taking support on edge, looking at the water with the air through her hair. The group of friends was at a table a bit further, looking at her.

- "She seemed so broken," stated Will.

- "It's all new for her, she is trying to understand what she is feeling," told Dustin.

- "Yeah, or trying to find a way to jump in the water!" joked Lucas.

- "Don't be stupid, she is not suicidal! She is just lost!"

- "You should maybe check how she is, no?" said Will.

- "Me? Why me?" frowned Max.



- "You're close to each other, she could talk more easily to you, you don't think?"

- "I, I don't know...I'm not really neutral in this situation."

- "She bought you something, she is not waiting for you to be neutral, she certainly wants someone to support her!" affirmed Dustin.

- "Yeah...You're certainly right..."

The redhead stood and slowly walked to her friend. She put her arms in the same position as her and looked at her.

- "If you wanna jump, I can help you to get above the edge," joked Max.

El chuckled.

- "I'm fine, I just don't understand why," confessed El.

- "You don't understand why you're fine?" frowned the redhead.

- "Yes, I mean, we had been together for years now, I thought breaking up with him would, at least, make me sad, but I'm not, I'm just feeling anything, just lighter."

- "Maybe because it's a good thing, even if it's supposed to be sad, for you, it was the right thing to do, and you know it."

- "Yeah...How is he?"

- "Mike? I...don't care."

El chuckled again.

- "What do you wanna do?" asked Max with a smile.

- "I don't know. I follow you," answered El.

- "Well, there is a quiz night, we can go, if you want. The boys are going, I thought it could be a good way to clear your head."

- "Sounds good."

Max grabbed the other girl's hand and took her to the boys' table. They ordered something to eat and waited ten minutes before the beginning of the quiz. They had lots of fun, they were all crazy, trying to win the game. El didn't know much, but seeing them being excited every time they heard a music they knew without remembering the name was making her laugh. Max was right, it cleared her head. They had only five points, which meant they were the last ones, but they didn't care, they had so much fun that it didn't matter. And Max didn't care more because El laughed all night, without letting go her hand.

After this, the entire group went to their cabins. El asked Max if she could sleep with her, and the redhead accepted with no hesitation. It was a good day.

## 4. Pool

When Max opened her eyes, El was still asleep. The redhead lightly caressed her hair, not wanting to wake her up. She looked so peaceful. Her break up didn't seem to affect her too much, it was a relief. It was calm, quiet. El's breathing was soothing, pleasant. Max could spend her entire day like that, with El on her, sleeping. She almost forgot she was on a boat.

The brunette slowly opened her eyes, yawning, before looking around and stretching her body. She got closer of Max and put her head against the redhead's.

- "Uh...you're okay?" asked Max with a shaking voice.

- "Yes," smiled El.

- "How did you sleep?"

- "Good, and you?"

- "Same."

One movement and she could kiss her, but she didn't move. She didn't want to ruin everything and lose her forever. The two girls got out of the bed, getting ready for the breakfast. Max was still not believing how close they were, ready to kiss at any moment. When they arrived, they sat with Will, Dustin, and Lucas at the table. El noticed Mike a bit further, alone, so she decided to talk to him.

- "Hey," said softly El.

- "Hey," answered calmly Mike.

- "May I?"

Mike shrugged, so El sat next to him.

- "I was wondering how you were..." told shyly the girl.

- "Like someone whose ass got dumped."

- "Yeah...Sorry..."
  - "But it's fine, if you're here, it's because you want me back, right?"
  - "Mike..."
  - "What!?"
  - "It's over, it's not working anymore..."
  - "Yeah...That's what I was fearing..." sighed Mike.
  - "I'm sorry, I never wanted to hurt you..."
  - "Don't be, it's my fault. I tried to keep you with me as possible as I could because I saw you were not interested in me anymore, and it scared me. I'm sorry, I was a cunt, and I shouldn't have treated you like that..."
  - "I'm not mad at you," reassured El.
  - "Well, I'm mad at me! I did everything I shouldn't to keep you with me, I'm so stupid..."
- El pouted. It was true, Mike acted like an asshole lately, it wasn't the kind of things to do, but now, he seemed to realize it. Maybe he was able to change at the end. Maybe she could give him another chance...but did she want it? She wasn't sure.
- "You don't wanna come with us?" asked softly the girl.
  - "Um...we're still friends?"
  - "Yeah, of course, I mean, you're still mine."
  - "Cool, you're still mine too," smiled the boy.
  - "So? You wanna come with us?"
  - "Uh...no, I'm gonna stay a bit alone, to think about it."
  - "Okay, well, see you later then."

- "Yeah, see you."

Mike and El separated, the boy going to his cabin, and the girl going back to her friends, sitting again next to Dustin.

- "Um, is everything okay?" asked the curly-haired boy.

- "Yeah it's fine," smiled El.

- "You're back together?" asked Lucas, knowing everybody wanted to know.

- "No, we're just friends. He wants some time to think about it."

- "Good, I think you made the right choice," told Will.

- "Yeah, I think that too."

Dustin gently rubbed her back with a smile like to comfort and encourage her. El reassured him with a smile, before beginning to eat her breakfast. She was feeling fine. She was happy that Mike wasn't mad at her, she still liked him, he was still important for her.

- "So? What do we do today?" asked El with a smile.

- "Jacuzzi!" answered quickly Max with excitement. "There is no way for me to leave this boat without trying the Jacuzzi!"

- "Okay, okay, we'll go!" chuckled Lucas.

- "Nice," smiled the redhead.

- "What is Jacuzzi?" frowned El.

- "It's a hot bath with bubbles," explained Dustin.

- "A hot...what!?"

- "You'll see, it's amazing and so relaxing!" added Max.

- "Does it hurt?"

- "No, of course not, but if you don't feel okay inside, you can stay

next to us, don't worry."

- "Okay, I can try."

- "And if you really don't like it, we can do something else, it's fine."

- "Okay," smiled El.

The teens finished their breakfast before going to their cabins. El put again her favorite swimsuit, still not liking the one that Mike bought for her. The brunette couldn't stop smiling. Max seemed so excited to try the Jacuzzi, she couldn't stop talking about it!

- "You're ready?" asked Max with a big smile.

- "I think I am," answered El.

- "Nice, let's go try this Jacuzzi!"

The redhead grabbed her friend's hand and her bag before going outside the cabin and running to the spa. The three boys were already there, waiting for them. They arrived near the bath, and put the bubbles on. The boys went inside, while Max noticed that El wasn't totally comfy with this.

- "Are you okay?" asked the redhead with a concerned tone.

- "Yeah...it's just..."

- "Hey, if you're not ready it's fine, don't worry, you don't have to do this."

- "But I want to, it seems fun!" told El with an upset tone.

- "Okay, then, you can do it step by step, okay? You can sit on the edge with me, to begin, okay?"

- "Okay..."

El was feeling stupid, it was just water! But she couldn't stop thinking of the tub she used to go when she was in the lab. The difference now was that no one was forcing her, just encouraging her to keep

moving. Max sat on the edge and held out her hand in her direction. El took a deep breath, before grabbing the hand and sitting next to her friend. The three boys, wanting to make her feel more comfortable, got out of the water to sit on the edge with them. After a moment, El felt better and asked if they could go in the water. Once inside, the teens all enjoyed the bubbles massaging their bodies, taking a break with life.

- "So? How is it?" murmured Max.

- "I think I like it," said shyly El.

- "See, I told you it wouldn't hurt, I would never do this."

- "Do what?"

- "Hurting you, I would never bring you somewhere if I knew it would hurt you," smiled the redhead.

El felt her cheeks burning, certainly because of the hot water. She liked being with Max, she was feeling more confident and stronger. Max was the kind of person to protect but without being too intrusive, she liked the freedom she had with her, she could be more herself. It was funny because El could feel the bubbles of the Jacuzzi in her stomach, she wondered how it did to go inside her like that, without feeling it. But it wasn't unpleasant, she liked it.

After a moment, they decided to get out, too hot now. They were so relax that they didn't want to do something, just keep relaxing by doing nothing, so they went near the pool and laid down on deckchairs, sunbathing.

- "It's gonna be so hard to go back to school," stated Dustin.

- "Just enjoy," answered Lucas.

- "Can I join?"

The five teens opened one eye, hiding the sun with their hands, looking at Mike.

- "Of course bud', we kept a place for you," answered Dustin, taking

off the stuff on the deckchair next to him.

The black-haired boy had an uncomfortable smile but joined them anyway, relieved that they weren't mad at him.

- "I'm sorry..." began Mike. "I didn't want to be a complete asshole, I said stupid things, especially to you Max, I was stupid, I'm sorry..."

- "It's fine Michael."

- "I still hate you for calling me like this, Maxine."

The redhead raised her middle finger to him with a smile, making chuckle the others. They stayed under the sun until lunch, wanting to try the restaurant. It was good-quality but poor in the plates. The teens were still hungry, so they went to the cafeteria to finish their lunch. They went back to the pool but to swim this time. The four boys and Max managed to make feel El comfortable enough to go in the water.

- "How is it?" asked Lucas with a smile.

- "It's...not that bad," answered El, with her body shaking.

- "You're doing great," encouraged Will.

- "Now, let's swim!" told Dustin.

- "Now!?" stressed El.

- "Don't worry, we won't let you drown," reassured Max.

- "Okay!"

El firmly grabbed Max and Lucas's wrists. The two teens looked at each other with an amused smile, before helping El to walk in the water.

- "If you're not read—"

- "No! It's fine, I can do it."

El took deep breathes with her nose, trying to calm her racing heart.



She tried to not panic, but all her memories with Papa were coming back in her mind, freezing her body.

- "El?" frowned Will.

- "I...I..."

- "You're not ready, it's fine."

Max and Lucas managed to free their wrists from the girl's hands, and both took her by her shoulders, bringing her to the edge of the pool. El was slowly coming back to herself, seeing again her friends.

- "Are you okay?" asked Max with a concerned tone.

- "Yeah...Sorry...I didn't want to scare you..."

- "No, no, it's fine, don't worry about us," reassured Mike.

- "Yeah...I'm going in the cabin, (stands) see you."

El took her stuff and walked away. All the teens pouted, not really knowing what to do in that case.

- "You should go with her," said Mike.

- "Me!?" frowned Max.

- "Yes, you! She trusts you!"

- "God, what happened to you!?" asked Dustin.

- "Many things, I thought a lot yesterday and today. And I read your magazine about toxic relationship..."

- "Oh..."

- "Anyway, she likes you, and I know you like her, a lot, so go! Don't let her alone while she is sad and ashamed to be scared!"

- "Uh...okay, sure!" answered the redhead.

Max stood, took her stuff, and went in direction of the cabin. She

didn't go directly in her room, looking for something before, something to eat for El. When she found it, she went in her cabin. She heard the shower, telling her where El was. She sat on her bed, waiting for her friend to come back. The brunette got out of the bathroom, her hair wetted, wearing her clothes.

- "Oh, uh, I didn't want to worry you, I'm fine," told El.

- "You're sure? You were all pale and frozen."

- "Yeah, I know, but I'm feeling better now, you can go back with the others if you want."

- "No I'm fine, it's less funny without you anyway," pouted Max.

El had a small smile, before laying down on her bed.

- "You look sad, you're sure everything is fine?" asked softly the redhead.

- "Yes, I'm just tired..."

- "You miss Mike?"

- "He is still my friend, it's fine. I don't think I was in love with him."

- "Okay...You're missing your home?"

- "Yeah..." sighed El. "I'm not telling that spending five days with you is awful but..."

- "You miss your home, your own space, your habits, I understand," reassured Max.

- "You miss your home too?"

- "Not really, I prefer being here."

- "It's still hell?"

- "It's...complicated."

- "You never thought to run away?"

- "To go where? And the boys would be lost without me," lightly joked Max.

El had a small chuckle before looking at the ceiling.

- "I had nowhere to go, when I ran away," told El. "But, I knew it couldn't be worse."

- "Was it hard?"

- "What was hard?"

- "To run away, I mean, I tried when I was younger, but a cop caught me and took me back home, but you, you abandoned the only life you knew!"

- "Well, it was...scary...I didn't know how to talk, or interact with people, but I found the boys, they helped me, and I helped them..."

- "You sacrificed yourself for them, it's so brave, you have no idea!" stated Max.

- "I don't know, I was the only one able to stop it, I did what I had to do."

- "You're still brave and fucking badass!"

El giggled, throwing a pillow to her friend.

- "You know, there will be always a place for you at my home," told El.

- "I know," softly smiled the redhead. "But I can't spend the rest of my life squatting your room!"

- "Why not? Dad won't bother you."

- "I know, but it's fine, I survived until today, I can survive more."

- "I know, but it doesn't mean you have to."

Max didn't know what to answer. What El said, it was like if she needed someone to tell her this, that she didn't have to suffer just

because she could handle it. It wasn't how life was supposed to work. But she still couldn't squat El's home, it would be weird, and she wasn't sure Hopper would love this idea. For now, she was enjoying her moment with the other girl, looking at her with a smile.

- "I'm gonna sleep," said El.

- "No problem, I can go if you want."

- "No, no, don't go, you can stay."

- "Okay," smiled Max.

The redhead stood and went to the bathroom to take a shower. She liked talking with El, she lived so many hard things that she was able to understand everyone's struggles with life. It was reassuring to be understood. Once cleaned, Max went back in her room and laid down on her bed, reading a magazine, while El was deep in her dreams.

## 5. Last day on a boat

It was the last day. El was all excited, wanting to go back home, but Max didn't want this day to end, not missing her toxic family.

- "You can stay at home tonight if you want," said El.

- "No, it's fine, I don't want you to have an overdose of me," joked the redhead.

- "Don't be stupid, I can't overdose you."

The two girls were on their beds, looking at the ceiling.

- "It was a funny week," told the brunette.

- "Yeah, it was, at least you were able to come with us, it's cool."

- "Yeah, it was so cool!"

- "I can't wait for you to come at school," said Max.

- "Me too, it's so boring to stay the entire day in my room, even if Mike was coming every night, the day, I was doing nothing, dad is working and all of you are at school. I've nothing to do."

Max pouted. It wasn't an easy life. Not being allowed to go outside, to be sure she wouldn't have problems with more degenerated men wanting to use her again. It was like in the lab, but without being a rat lab, she was still stuck in a place.

- "Max?"

- "Yeah?"

- "Stay with me tonight, please."

- "I think I can do that."

The two girls turned their heads to each other before smiling. El had a really cute smile, and with her pink cheeks, it was even cuter. They

stood and began to pack their bags before going to the cafeteria to take their breakfast. The boys weren't there yet, suiting the redhead, enabling her to have an intimate breakfast with her friend.

- "You think there is a skatepark?" asked El.

- "A skatepark? Where?" frowned Max.

- "Here!"

- "On the boat!?"

- "Yeah! I mean, there is a pool, arcade, why not a skatepark? It would have all the things you love."

- "That's true, but if you don't stay here, I won't have everything I love!"

Max felt her heart stopping, realizing what she just said. She didn't dare to look at El, too scared of her reaction, and not wanting her to notice her face completely red. Why did she say that!? It was stupid, now El was going to understand her feelings for her, and to reject her, and to hate her!

- "That's so nice, I love you too," told softly El with a smile.

She didn't get it, for Max's relief. The redhead began to breathe again, while El didn't even notice how embarrassed she was, focused on her toast. Will and Lucas arrived, saving a bit the situation.

- "Hey girls," greeted the black boy with his eyes half closed.

- "Hey boys, you don't think you should have stayed in bed?" lightly chuckled Max.

- "No, I'm fine, I wanted to enjoy our last day on this boat."

- "It doesn't mean you have to fall asleep in your bowl!"

- "I won't, don't worry."

- "What were you talking about?" asked Will.

- "We were telling each other that we love each other," answered naively El.

Lucas didn't need more to be awoken. The two boys looked at Max with the same smile. The redhead made movement with her hand to gently tell them to go fuck themselves.

- "She didn't understand," murmured Max.

- "I know, but you still tell her you love her," whispered Will.

- "It was like that!"

- "It's never like that," stated Lucas.

- "Shut up, both of you! I don't want her to know!"

- "Why not? It could be a good thing!"

- "She just broke up with her boyfriend, I won't jump on her like a starving lion on a prey! She needs time for herself too!"

- "Can I know what you're talking about?" intervened El who leaned to them.

- "Nothing," replied quickly the three teens.

- "Okay," chuckled the brunette. "What do we do today?"

- "We could go to the dancing club!" proposed Lucas.

- "At 10 AM?" frowned Max.

- "No, but before we arrived, we're not on earth before 11 PM, we've time to enjoy it!"

- "Yeah, sounds fun!" told happily El.

- "Exactly! Thank you El," said Lucas.

- "Fine! You win!" replied Max.

The redhead playfully shook her head, while her three friends were

chuckling. The four teens were joined by Dustin and Mike. Max was impressed by Mike's behavior and mood since he got his ass dumped. He was more relaxed, smiling, and joking, not always trying to keep El for him, or blaming Max for each words she was pronouncing. It was really pleasant, for everyone. The party left the cafeteria to finish on the deck, playing cards. They spent several minutes to explain El how to play, before beginning many games, all won by Max.

- "I hate you!" grumbled Mike.

- "I know," chuckled Max.

- "One day, I'll understand how you cheat!" told Dustin.

- "I don't! I'm just better than all of you!"

- "Against me it's not hard, I've no idea of what I'm doing!" stated El with a smile.

- "Yeah, we saw," said Will. "It's your turn by the way."

- "Then, I play this (puts her card on the table)."

Max, Will, Lucas, Dustin, and Mike wide opened their eyes and mouths, not believing it.

- "What? I did something wrong?" asked El.

- "No way!" exclaimed Dustin.

- "You fucking won!" told Lucas.

- "Really? Cool," smiled El.

- "Cool!? That's all you have to say!? You fucking kicked Max's ass! We spent the last years trying to destabilize her, and you, who doesn't know how to play, you just won! How!?" explained Mike.

- "Maybe I always knew what I was doing, because I spent those last years watching you playing and I understood everyone's strategies?"

- "Nah, you just had luck!" replied Dustin.



- "Yeah, it's exactly that," chuckled El.
- "I give up, (throws his cards on the table) if El managed to win without knowing how, I don't know why I should waste my time while she did it in a few minutes!" told Will.
- "Max? You've nothing to say?" frowned Lucas.
- "I'm trying to digest my unexpected defeat."
- "Yeah, I understand, it must be hard to lose against me," joked El.
- "You have no idea!"

The group of friends laughed, stopping the game on this victory. They went to the Jacuzzi again, because El loved the bubbles, and she wasn't too scared in it, not like in the pool. No one complained, they all loved the Jacuzzi. They all put their swimsuits and went in the water, without waiting on the edge first this time. After a moment, Max felt fingers intertwining with hers. It was El, feeling so comfortable that she wanted to show it to her friend like that. Max had a powerful smile, with light pink cheeks, not believing that such a beautiful girl like her could hold her hand right now.

- "I want a Jacuzzi in my room," told El.
- "If you do that, you'll have to install five mattresses in your room for all of us," joked Dustin.
- "I can do that, I'll have some company like that."
- "You know, if you're bored, you can call us, we'll come without hesitating," said Will.
- "I know, I just don't want to bother you..."
- "Bother us!? Mike bother us but not you!" told Max.
- "Fuck you!" frowned Mike.
- "Yeah, whatever!"

Mike showed his middle finger to her, making laugh the others. They stayed in the Jacuzzi until lunch, all going to eat completely relaxed. Once filled, they decided to sunbath next to the pool to digest correctly. As the others were taking a nap, Will decided to sit next to El to talk to her.

- "Hey, what's up?" smiled the boy.
- "Nothing special, and you?" answered El.
- "Same. You seem happy since you broke up, it's cool to see."
- "Yeah, we were not born to finish together, but I'm happy we're still friends, I still like him."
- "Yeah, he is a nice friend."
- "True."
- "So, you're gonna looking for someone else?"
- "Do I have to!?" asked quickly El.
- "No, of course not!" lightly chuckled Will.
- "Oh, cool, you scared me!"
- "You prefer being alone?"
- "I'm not alone, I have my friends."
- "Yeah, that's true. But you have no one in your mind?"
- "What do you mean?" frowned the girl.
- "You don't have someone who made you feel a bit more different? Like, special, with butterflies in your stomach?"
- "There are butterflies in my stomach!?"
- "No! It's an expression, relax! There is no butterfly in your stomach," chuckled the boy. "It's just a way to explain the feelings in your stomach, like if there were butterflies flying inside you, or bubbles."

- "Like in the Jacuzzi?"

- "Yeah! Exactly, bubbles like in the Jacuzzi. You already had bubbles when you were with Mike?"

- "...I don't know..."

- "It's fine, I don't want to pressure you with my curiosity, don't worry, just enjoy the sun."

El nodded. Will hoped he didn't ruin her mood, but he wanted to know if she was feeling something like that around Max. He noticed she was always holding her hands, looking at her, wanting her to stay with her, but maybe it was just a girl thing.

El kept thinking about what Will just told her. She remembered the first time she went in the Jacuzzi, she felt bubbles inside her, but she didn't know how it came inside. Maybe she was having feelings for someone without knowing it. But who? It wasn't Mike, she was sure of it. It wasn't Will, because she hadn't bubbles inside her right now. Maybe one of the three others, but which one? Dustin? No, he had a girlfriend, and she wasn't jealous of it. Lucas? Max? She didn't know. But she knew she liked being with Max, she was feeling safe with her, and important, like if she was special. Just thinking of her provoked bubbles in her stomach. It was Max, she was sure of it now. She should tell her, but how? Did she have to go to her and tell her she had bubbles in her stomach? It wasn't weird? She didn't know, but Max wasn't the kind to mock her when she was doing something socially abnormal. She could try, during their sleepover.

It was the beginning of the night, and the group of friends went in the dance club. Apparently, the rest of their class had the same idea. But they didn't care, at least there was a good ambience. They were all dancing in the middle of the dancefloor, jumping and laughing. After a moment, they were all tired and sat at a table. The boys went to the bar to ask for something to drink, letting the two girls alone. El was playing with Max's hair, enjoying the bubbles inside her, while Max was feeling her heart racing.

- "I like your hair!" said loudly El because of the music.

- "Thank you, I like yours too!" answered Max.
- "Our hair would match!"
- "Um...yeah, certainly!"
- "I like your eyes too! Blue is my favorite color!"
- "Uh, okay! Are you drunk, or something like that?" frowned the redhead.
- "I don't know what it means, so, maybe!" chuckled El.
- "You sound like if you were flirting with me!"
- "Does it work?"
- "What?"
- "I've never flirted before, I want to know if it works, or if it's weird!"
- "Wait, you're really flirting with me!?" asked quickly Max.
- "I think, yes," smiled El.
- "Did you bet with one of the boys, or you're trying to mock me!?"
- "Mock you!? Why would I do that!? Will told me for the bubbles in the stomach, and I realized I had bubbles in my stomach with you, every time, so I'm trying to flirt, like in the movies, but if it was weird, I'm sorry, I wanted to try!"

Max didn't know what to answer, she was like frozen by this news. She didn't know if it was real, or just another dream, but she couldn't look away from El who was still playing with her hair and widely smiling , waiting for a reaction.

- "You're really flirting with me!?"
- "Yeah...I hope it doesn't bother you..." said El with a bit less confidence.
- "Bother me!? El! I dreamt of this for I don't even know how many

times! Watching you with Mike was the worst pain ever!" exclaimed Max.

- "Oh no, I'm sorry!"

- "Don't be, it's fine, it's all fine! If you're sure of what you're doing now—"

- "I am!"

- "Then it's all fine!"

El's smile reappeared, making smile the redhead in front of her. El placed a small kiss on Max's cheek, before putting her head on her shoulder and wrapping her arms around Max's left arm. The redhead didn't really know what to do, her biggest crush just clumsily flirted with her, it was more than she hoped! The boys came back with the drinks.

- "She just flirted with me!" told Max, still not believing it.

- "That's amazing!!" answered Lucas.

Dustin, Will, Lucas, and Max all turned to Mike.

- "It's fine, I knew she had a crush on you, she just didn't know it," said the boy.

- "It doesn't bother you?" frowned the redhead.

- "I prefer things like this, she wasn't happy with me, I know she will be with you."

- "You're not a complete asshole."

- "I know."

The two friends smiled to each other, both relieved to be in good terms. After their drinks, the teens went back on the dance floor, El dancing around Max. At the end of a song, El jumped in the redhead's arms, all excited by this new thing between them. When Max broke the hug, El slowly approached to Max, biting her bottom lip, before

connecting hers with Max's. The redhead felt an explosion inside her, not wanting it to stop. The kiss wasn't long, but long enough to make blush the two girls.

It was 11 PM, and the boat arrived. All the teens were holding their bags, all going to their families. El gently grabbed Max's hand and took her to Hopper's car, for their first sleepover as a couple.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Hi! This is the end of my shot story :)  
I hope you liked it!

See you in another book :D